

## PROVICIENCY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT OPTIMIZATION EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH OPTIMALIZING THE ROLES OF PARENTS

Barokah Widuroyekti

PGPAUD FKIP Study Program of Universitas Terbuka UPBJJ Surabaya

HP. 081231777347

Email: [barokahw@ut.ac.id](mailto:barokahw@ut.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

*Living in globalization era requires efforts to prepare a generation who have literacy skill and able to compete globally. Literacy skills does not grow and develop by itself but it needs some well-designed effort since the beginning of life through active interaction, experience that related with handwriting, and the parents' role in the family environment. Therefore, an adequate of insight and knowledge of parents to help and to develop their children is needed. Errors that happened on patterns of care giving and learning could disturb, even hampering the children. Developing literacy skills on early childhood does not mean to teach them how to read and write formally but developing and preparing children for growing motivation and interest into skill of writing, aware of noises, riches vocabulary, narrative skills, aware of writing, and knowledge about letters. Optimizing the parents' role on developing of literacy skills could be done within many kinds of developing activities that carefully planned, such as: Reading with children, storytelling, Introducing the name of an object, singing with rhythmical word, introducing books and how to read books, doing many kinds of game for introducing the letters. Parents and teachers should build a good synergy to align early childhood education at kindergarten school and at home, especially on development of literacy skills on early childhood.*

**Keywords:** *literacy, early childhood, and the parents' role*

Literacy skill is a very valuable capital and needed in life nowadays as information has been flooded through all kinds of media. Someone's ability to absorb the information and to filter it is the main capital for taking the advantages of various information which is provided in the written form.

The capability of literacy is not automatically achieved without learning process. The growth of literacy capability needed learning process progressively, which is done in the early childhood. Early literacy introduction can change the child become a long life learner (Pierce,2007). The result of Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (200) found that the experience of the children in literacy interaction on their early aged will prepare them to follow the formal school learning. The result of Durkin (in Dhieni et al,2007) proved that children whom taught to read before they entered the primary school generally have the better ability compare to the children who do not have reading introduction on their early aged.

The children learn to construct the meaning and understanding towards the outer world through interaction with their environment. In their language development, the children process information through expressing and accepting their daily language. To prepare the children to be active readers in accordance with their development ages, their closest environment is the main factor in growing their literacy competence. The first and the closest environment for the children is their families especially the parents who have the main role and the biggest responsibility in supporting the growing literacy competence for the early childhood. The parents' role is stimulating for the growth of literacy competence of the early childhood even before the children enter the bigger environment in the early childhood institution.

Nowadays there is a growing phenomenon among parents that there is a big expectation which is burdening the early childhood institutions- the graduated kindergarten children should be able to read and write. This expectation has been pushed the kindergarten teachers to do many kinds of efforts to make their pupils in the kindergartens to be able to read and write without considering their phase of developing and characteristics of early childhood.

By having the parents' high expectations towards their children, it is the right time to actively involving in helping their children to develop optimally in accordance to their development phase. So far, there are many mistakes done by the parents, whom had been teaching their children in many ways to fasten their children ability to read and write without adequate knowledge about the children development phase. For example, asking to the in experts for giving an extra time courses for reading and writing for their children. This may cause negative impact to the next phase of the children development. Teaching reading and writing to the early childhood without giving attention to the its suitability to the children development phase and in many wrong ways will have caused a contra productivity and even cause impede the next development phase.

This paper is written for discussing the parents involving efforts in literacy competence for early childhood and its development and also some activities which can be done by the parents to stimulate and develop the early childhood competence.

### ***The Meaning of Literacy***

In the simple language, literacy could be defined as reading and writing skill. In big scale context, literacy could be used on any field of job, for example technological literacy, political literacy, economical literacy, and etc.

In specific ways, literacy has many kinds of definition by some researcher. Alwasilah (2005) says that literacy is reading-writing culture, the opposite of oral culture, and listening-speaking culture. Kirch & Janglebut (in Buchori, 2005) defined literacy as a skill of someone on using written information for developing knowledge that useful for people. Same as the previous definition, Graff (2006) simply defined, that literacy is ability to read and to write, and for the people who could read and write called literate.

Literacy that written in this paper, is literacy on early aged childhood or more known with emergent literacy. *Wikipedia encyclopedia* based explanation “Emergent literacy is a term that is used to explain a child’s knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words”. Shuy (1984) suggest that emergent literacy is defined as a skill for reading and writing since the children aged 1 - 6 years old. that Constructively based on the function and the purpose of communication (in Kalewidju, 1997). The first emergent literacy on early aged childhood definition is defined by Teale & Sulzby (in Burns, 1996), that is when the consciousness is linked between the sound and its symbol. In accordance with the opinion itself, emergent literacy defined as the beginning phase of development to the literacy, that it is the beginning of reading written expression in general (Clay, 1979 in Spodek, 1994).

Literacy skills in early aged childhood including six indicators, that are: print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness, and letter knowledge (Ghoting et al., 2006). *Print motivation* is component that related with interest and happiness of children towards the books. *Vocabulary* is component that related with knowledge about name of an object. *Print awareness* component that related with observing written expression, how to use a book, and how to recognize on the book pages and how word is arranged and read from left to right, up to down. *Narrative skill* is component that related with skills for describing object, phenomenon, or story-telling. *Letter knowledge* is component that related with comprehension that character is different from one to another. *Psychological awareness* is component that related with hearing skills and play with character sound and rhyme.

The Family environment especially parents have a big influence in developing children literacy. When parents like reading, the children will follow or copy their parents’ habits,

children will like reading. Parents who like reading stories for their children, indirectly will grow the children motivation and interest toward the book or story. Morrow (in Spodek,1994) said that conditions which are supporting the literacy development are: reading ability which gain from social interaction and attitude in the society ; children will get reading ability as the result of their experience; children will get their reading ability when they see the objective and its advantage; reading for the children plays an important role in gaining reading ability.

### ***Developing Literacy in Early Childhood Education***

The limitation of early childhood which is stated in the “Undang Undang Sistem Pendidikan” is children between 0-6 years old. In this period, children has the fastest period in developing and growing in many aspects of human life (Berk,1992 in Wahyudin 2012). The period of early childhood is the fast development period and the golden years in. in this years, children has a sensitive time, that is the ripeness time when there are a lot of function in physically and psychologically which are ready to accept and to response towards various developing stimulations given by the environment. In this paper , which is meant by early childhood is the children who is between 4-6 years old – the kindergarten pupils who are preparing to enter the primary school.

The literacy development in early childhood institution (PAUD) based on Permendiknas RI No. 58 Tahun 2009 about early childhood education standard is objected to achieve the achievement development level for the children age 4-6 years, that are: (1) pretending to read picture story in books by using their own words; (2) communicating orally, having their own vocabulary, and also knowing symbols to prepare reading, writing and counting;(3) reading their own name;(4) writing their own name. The achievement development level will give direction for the teachers in planning and doing the learning activities in the early childhood institutions (PAUD).

Literacy has been developed through the language ability, which covered the ability to listen and to speak, preparation to read and to write (Kemendiknas, 2010). The literacy development has been done by pointing the early childhood learning principals, such as: the children centered, integrated, in accordance with the children development level. Besides that, the learning process should be focused on the children development characteristics by playing and involving the children in the learning activities. The literacy development is designed to give

various experiences for the children through various activities which pointing the development of children language competence (Dhieni et al,2007)

The efforts that should be done in developing literacy for the early childhood will be in harmony with and supporting to the achievement of early childhood learning objectives that are: (1) created the growing and developing of the children through enhancing pre-school services;(2) created the development of knowledge , skills, and the parents attitude in the efforts for children optimal growth and development, (3) preparing the early childhood for entering the primary school (Wahyudin & Agustin, 2012). In other words, the efforts for literacy developing that have been done in early childhood institution (PAUD) connected with preparing the children for introducing reading-writing. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to pay attention the children readiness for reading. Teacher could observe the children reading readiness and giving right stimulation.

The reading readiness can be seen based on:

- Attracting with sounds, letters and words
- Able to hold books and opening pages in a correct way
- Knowing letters and its sounds
- Knowing many kinds of stories and anticipating the next story
- Able to repeat the complete sentence which has eight letter in rows
- Memorizing some children rhymes, songs or stories
- Able to know their own names or other words in the printed form
- Able to explain the meaning of the words that are used in the stories

(Cooper, Halsey, Laurent, Sullivan,2009)

### ***The Parents' Role in Early Childhood Literacy Development***

At the beginning of the children life experience year, the children know words, learn connecting the sound of words, and get knowledge of alphabetical characters through the parents interaction. The children started to learn literacy though observing and interacting towards the written symbols which they see in their first environment of their life,that is family. Through their family environment, the children started to know and to learn the symbols that combined with oral language and written pictures.

In accordance with the increasing age, the parents bring the children to the early childhood institution with the hope that the responsibility of their children education switched into the institution (PAUD). The hope is true, nevertheless parents should realize that the main responsibility of their children still on the parents shoulder. As it is in the literacy development and preparing the children to be able to read, write in the developing age still the responsibilities of the parents. Therefore, a mistaken opinion made by some parents that the problems of introducing or teaching reading-writing to the children is the teachers problems should be cleared. This wrong opinion need to be changed, that still the parents plays the main important role in preparing the children to become a generation who has suitable ability and ready to enter the life in competitive era of globalism era.

The literacy development of early childhood needs the involvement of parents' role optimally. The parents is in the first and main position as the first environment by the children. Parents have influences which is supporting and deciding objecting to the growth to the various basic children ability, including literacy mastering. The research report showed that the parents involvement influenced towards the quality of the children characteristics, such as, positive self-image, optimistic, social related orientation, language gaining, motorist skill, concepts, and problem solving (Spodek, 1994:204).

In the literacy development parents can stimulate for the growth of children literacy in many ways. It needs, good synergy between parents and teachers so there is a harmony between the education given by the teachers in the early childhood institution (PAUD) and the education given by the parents at home. Harmonization between the education in PAUD and at home is very important so this can give positive influence to the children development (Nugraha et all, 2008). However it is undeniable that in the fact often emerged problem between the PAUD institution and parents. One of the reason is that the education orientation between the teachers and the parents is different. This difference is influenced by the level of knowledge and education background.

The efforts of parents involvement in children literacy development need to be start by the teachers as their roles has better knowledge in educating and developing early childhood. This is needed in anticipating the happening of the mistaken and unbalancing education which is done in PAUD institution and at home. Even though there will be a possibility for misconception between the parents and teachers still some efforts can be

done to build the harmony between PAUD institution and the family. For example, arranging meeting agenda between the teachers and parents in such a programs or planning a special activities which involved parents so that every activities which involved the parents can be done well. As the form of services to increase the communication and respect to the family, the professional teachers in PAUD institution can give a hand to the parents to share the strategy to help their children to be success. One of the involvement forms which can be done by the PAUD institution in comprehensive friendship with the parents is doing extra learning time at home, that is academic learning activities that is done in the family (Epstein in Slavin, 2011).

The parents involvement in children development covered some services and activities which should be done by the parents for the children as an extra or developing program in PAUD. This activities form such as a help in learning or tutoring which is given to the children whether at school or at home. The professional teachers at PAUD institutions may invite the parents to come to school to discuss the program and various hope about their children by having the meeting teachers can help the parents to understand how they could support their children learning process (Slavin, 2011).

In literacy development context, parents' role need to be optimized in doing literacy stimulation activities in various forms. Optimizing the parents' role in supporting the efforts to literacy development can be based on some expert opinions as follows. Teale & Sulzby (1989) (in Burns 1996) recommended some activities can be done at home to increase the ability to read and write such as (1) Listening Stories (2) Writing Messages (3) Retelling a stories (4) playing drama which involved real reading and writing activities (5) reading stories with children (6) learning spelling names (7) knowing letters or words at home environment.

The role of the parents for growing motivation towards writing (*print motivation*), such as reading together activities, doing reading activities in front of the children, story telling, taking children to the bookstore, showing interesting books. Reading activities can be introduced to the children with reading together or reading stories for the children. Parents need to spend some times to read stories or reading with the children or building habits in reading with the children. This activities can be done while accompanying the

children playing time. When the children often sees their parents reading they will motivate and interests towards books.

The interest to the books and the love in reading and writing early can be developed by the parents at home. Burns (1996:48-49) gave some suggestions for the parents to lead the development of reading and writing ability as a form direct parents involvement in children literacy development, as follows “ (1) Reading pictures books, started when the children still babies,(2) parents listen patiently and support when the children are trying to express their ideas and answering correctly, (3) share letter that come in the mail so that the child understands that writing can communicate messages, (4) point out and read familiar signs, (5) provide writing materials and encourage their use for writing massage, shoping list, and letters, (6) model good reading practices by reading book for your own pleasure, (7) carry on conversation with the child, (8) share newspapers and magazines, encourage the child to find familiar words that appear in advertisement, (9) sing songs, do finger plays, recite nursery rhymes, and play guessing games, (10) take the child with you on visit and trips. Use specific term when discussing the experience, (11) involve the child in activities around the home, such as cooking, gardening, and paying bills. Point out the usefulness of recipes, instructions on seed packets, and checkbooks, (12) visit the children’s section of the library; let the child get a library card and check out lots of books, (13) read together cereal boxes, menus, place mats, street signs, coupons, and others forms of print, (14) encourage the child to “talk alike a book ” when sharing a storybook with you.”

The parents’ role in developing the narrative skill can be done in activities like, playing drama, storytelling, and tales storytelling. It is very good if parents tell stories or fairy tales to the children before the children sleep or reading stories while accompanying the children playing.the research result about reading stories book at home (Stickland and Morrow,1990 in Burns 1996) showed that story books supporting the interactive attitudes which influence towards the reading and writing abilities, they are asking, complimenting, offering information, leading to discussion, connecting concept in the story with life experience, repeating dialogue, and response in stories, and exchanging personal reaction. Using stories also have other advantage, that is reflecting the children wish and hopes and



gives satisfaction by listening it. Through story the children will find motives to lives or keep following there wish and hope (Suntana, 2014).

The parents' role in efforts to grow the awareness towards the sound phonological awareness, such as the involving in activities like singing reading with rhythm, guessing words with the children. While to enrich the children vocabularies can be done by: interaction and communication, introduction names of objects surround, and answering the children question, and enriching vocabularies.

The parents' role in developing printing awareness, can be done by teaching how to hold books, introducing how to open books, introducing the front/back part of the books doing how to read written words. Parents also can use words or writing in stories to introduce letters and developing knowledge about letters (letter knowledge). Through letters playing activities the parents can take the children to play with letters cards, so that they can learn in fun (enjoyment).

### ***Conclusion***

Literacy is ability which should be grown and develop since the early ages time for preparing generation who can compete in globalism era. Literacy development in the early age is not the responsibility of the teachers in PAUD institution wholly. The parents' role in supporting in literacy development is the main point that should be optimized to prepare a good literacy generation. The empirical prove has shown parents have dominants influence in preparing literate generation to be able to enter competitive life in globalism era.

The parents' role in reviving reading-writing cultures and literacy growing at home mainly focus on helping the children developing early literacy ability and reading like motivation. Various activities to support the literacy development can be done in such a fun way through reading activities together with the children story telling, introducing objects name, singing with rhythmic words, introducing how to use books, do many kind of games to learn letters of parts of words. Building reading habits by the parents will give big contribution in achieving literacy development of early age children, which can support the success of the following development.

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